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Jean Festa, MPH, OTR/L, FAOTA

11 Extension Street

Unionville, CT 06085

3/6/14

Insurance and Real Estate Committee

Legislative Office Building

300 Capital Avenue

Hartford, CT 06106

Regarding: Raised Bill No. 5249

AN ACT CONCERNING COPAYMENTS FOR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICES

Dear Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and Members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee:

My name is Jean Festa and I am a retired occupational therapist with over 35 years of experience. Prior to my retirement I worked in the areas of mental health, home care, long term care and out-patient. My last employment was as Director of Outpatient Rehabilitation at Masonicare Health Center in Wallingford, CT. I was responsible for occupational, physical and speech therapy and this experience made me acutely aware of the issue at hand. I am requesting that you pass Bill No. 5249 which would be an extension of last year's Public Act No. 13-307 (House Bill 6546), which similarly limited the co-payments for physical therapy services.

I witnessed on a daily basis the burden for some patients to be able to manage high co-payments for the therapy they needed. People came to us with a variety of problems interfering with daily functioning and often were of the type that caused them to teeter on being able to remain in their own homes. These could include recovery from a stroke, an injury or surgery related to a shoulder, knee or hip. A perfect example of the burden of high copayments is my sister. She was accidentally tripped by her cat and suffered a significant shoulder injury. Even though it was recommended she receive occupational therapy for her shoulder a certain numbers of times a week she had to reduce both the frequency and duration due to the financial burden of the co-pay. She now lives with a painful shoulder that was never fully rehabilitated and has caused other problems related to the original injury. She had to choose between paying her bills or therapy. In a country as great as ours, this should not happen.

Whether one needs occupational or physical therapy they should be treated equally and I ask that you support Bill No. 5249. Occupational Therapists are the often the unsung heroes in the therapy world. We address the "mundane" but crucial aspects of life that include being able to dress, bathe and feed oneself, cook, manage finances and many other daily living activities that most of us never have to think about. Until we can no longer do them.

I understand you receive many requests and correspondence on a number of urgent matters and thank you for your time. I am available for any questions you might have if you would find it helpful.

Sincerely,

Jean Festa, MPH, OTR/L, FAOTA

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